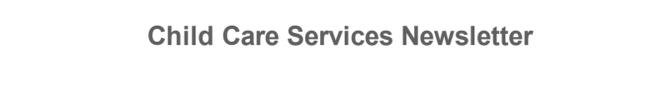


Child Care

NEWS BRIEF



Child Care Services Newsletter

Greetings from your partners at the TN Department of Human Services, Child Care Services Team!

Fall is now upon us as well as the start of the new 2022-2024 Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan Cycle as we approach a new Federal Fiscal Year! This is a time of launching new initiatives based on what we have heard from child care agencies and families that we serve. In this September edition of the monthly newsletter, we will focus on new initiatives, new resources and enhancement of existing resources that will be implemented effective October 1, 2021. These efforts are to build a resilient, stable and seamless early care and education system with an emphasis on improving quality, and increasing access while strengthening business efficiencies. We greatly appreciate our child care provider partners and all that you do for the children and families of Tennessee.

TDHS contracts with a group of "Quality Partners" annually that comprise the early care and education network of supports. Based upon their expertise, these partners offer a broader network of resources for providers that promote spaces that are safe, healthy and educationally rich. The types of support offered to providers through quality partners include:

- coaching and training on child development and supervision;
- infant and early childhood mental health supports;
- early literacy resources;
- shared services and bulk purchasing;
- enhancement grants; and
- child care educator coursework and academic credentials.

This group will continue to be engaged to provide coaching, mentoring, technical assistance and professional development supports to facilitate continuous quality improvement for licensed child care providers.

You may access these supports by visiting our website at [Child Care Services \(tn.gov\)](https://www.tn.gov/child-care) or by discussing specific needs with your licensing consultant who can connect you to the resource(s) that best support you, your staff and your agency.

New Initiatives Launching October 2021

Child Care Reimbursement Rate Increase

We are so excited to share with you **Great News** regarding a 10% reimbursement rate increase which will go into effect October 1, 2021 for all child care providers who participate in the Child Care Certificate Program. This increase is to support our continuous goal of increasing access to quality child care for families and to incentivize providers to participate in the Child Care Certificate Program.

Under this reimbursement rate change all providers will receive a 10% increase in the weekly reimbursement rates for all care levels for children of families approved through the Child Care Certificate Program. As you know, the Department pays participating agencies for the child's enrollment to align with private pay practices and to support equal access to quality care regardless of the provider rate, even if the provider rates are less.

The Reimbursement Rate Structure will continue to support separate differentials above the base State Rate for the following:

- 15% differential for counties identified as child care deserts or economically distressed.
- 15% differential offered to agencies providing non-traditional hours of care and where the majority of the child's care occurs between the hours of 6:00PM to 6:00AM.
- Beginning October 1, 2021, a 15% differential will be added for children identified with diagnosed disabilities and special needs.

The link to the Reimbursement Rate Chart effective October 1, 2021 [may be accessed here](#).

Supports for Serving Children with Diagnosed Disabilities or Having Special Needs

Supports for Families

Families of young children with disabilities are significantly more likely to experience job disruptions due to lack of access to quality child care that accommodates their children's needs. For children who have been identified with disabilities and special needs, TDHS is providing a 15% differential above standard reimbursement rates.

Supports for Child Care Providers

In alignment with this increased financial support, TDHS is also partnering with the Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R) to create a team of Inclusion Quality Coaches that will strengthen provider capacity to include children with disabilities in early child care settings. The Inclusion Quality Coaches will work closely with child care agencies to create strategies that promote inclusive early childhood environments for children with special needs. Activities offered through CCR&R can include:

- Create tools and resources for child care agencies as well as partners and families.
- Standardize inclusion training accessible to early childhood educators at basic and advanced levels.
- Provide a coaching system for inclusion providers using best practices. The Inclusion Quality Coaches will provide coaching on challenging behaviors, developmental delays and medically identified disabilities.
- Provide on-site coaching to help children with disabilities receive safe, high quality care and appropriate accommodations. Inclusion Coaches shall utilize an Inclusion Coaching plan that provides a blueprint for educators to ensure children in the classroom have sufficient learning opportunities, activities, and materials; and provides opportunity to work with educators and parents to individualize accommodations and supports that may be necessary for all children to participate in activities and build relationships with their peers.
- CCR&R coaches will evaluate the need for adaptive equipment or technology to support inclusion and guide child care agencies to available enhancement grants administered through the Community Foundations of Middle Tennessee (CFMT).
- CCR&R will liaise with and facilitate connections and referrals to the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD)/Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) for children up to age three (3) and with the Tennessee Department of Education for children ages 3-5 to support smooth transitions between early care and kindergarten.

Tech Goes Home

Beginning in October 2021, TDHS will deploy the "Tech Goes Home" model available to child care agencies which includes the provision of technology devices, coaching and TA on the use of the equipment and how it strengthens business operations. This program is in collaboration with the Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R) and will support child care agencies in modernizing their systems and equipment in order to lessen the administrative burden and allow providers to focus on family/child interactions and delivering quality care. There will be a simple application located on the [CCR&R website](#) that will be made available when the program is fully launched.

Establishment/Expansion Grants

TDHS is committed to increasing access to quality child care. Through Establishment and Expansion Grants, TDHS will use American Rescue Plan Act administrative dollars to provide financial support for furniture, equipment, supply, and curriculum costs associated with opening a new child care agency or expanding licensed capacity at an existing agency. Promotion of the establishment grants aligns with announcement of the new TDHS Pre-Licensure Support Unit on August 1, 2021. TDHS is also partnering with staff at the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development regarding how Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds could possibly be used to support construction or renovation of child care spaces.

Existing child care agencies who wish to expand their capacity should contact their Licensing Consultant after October 1st to begin the process.

Enhancement of Existing Resources

Child Care WAGES Program Increase

The Child Care WAGES Program that launched statewide in October 2019 is an education-based salary supplement program for child care educators employed in TDHS licensed child care agencies. With many providers citing access to child care workers as a challenge, and wages of child care workers often being low, TDHS will be funding an increase to the WAGES eligibility cap from \$15/hour to \$20/hour and increase supplement amounts by 50% beginning October 2021. This stronger supplement will enhance providers' ability to attract and retain a high-quality workforce. The new WAGES Supplement [may be accessed here](#).

Child Care Enhancement Grant Changes

Child Care Enhancement grants will continue to be available to licensed child care agencies to increase capacity, strengthen quality, and/or promote compliance with State licensing standards. There is a base amount available of \$4000 with additional supplemental amounts based on certain criteria:

- Physically operate in one of the economically distressed counties as may be identified by the Governor shall be eligible for an additional \$1000.00.
- Are verified by the Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network as having completed Infant and Toddler Specialization (ITCS) for an additional \$1000.00.
- Seeking national accreditation through either the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), or National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) shall be eligible for an additional \$1000.00
- Participation in the Child Care Certificate Program and meet all criteria under the contract shall be eligible for an additional \$1000.00
- Are referred by the State for compliance or remediation of deficiencies shall be eligible for an additional \$1000.00

Allowable expenditures under the enhancement grants includes but is not limited to:

- **Equipment:** Playground materials to meet safety standards or ADA compliance for serving children with disabilities; furnishings to create or increase capacity; items that support bulk purchasing or sanitation such as refrigerators or dishwashers; assistive technology or adaptive devices that support serving children with disabilities and the provision of inclusionary care; materials used for learning purposes or meal/feeding activities; or health and safety supports (carbon monoxide detectors, smoke detectors, door alarms, camera recording systems, emergency preparedness kits, transportation upgrades or safe sleep materials); provided that in order to constitute "Equipment" each such item must have a cost of less than five thousand dollars (\$5000.00).
- **Program Enhancements, including Supplies:** Materials supporting learning, educational, and developmental enrichment (i.e. books, toys, displays, parent information, educator professional development, curriculum for special needs or multilingual children, etc.); behavioral modification supports related to opioid prevalence or other student needs; promoting wellness, physical activity, and good nutrition; family engagement; or strengthening learning and health and safety standards.
- **Consultant and Coaches:** Support for purchasing educationally rich curriculum; support for curriculum coaches and consultants; or such professional fees for CPA or tax advisors to improve financial stability (although not routine accounting or tax preparation services).

Applications to apply for enhancement grants are located on the www.childcaretennessee.com website.

Continuation of Existing Resources

Shared Resources and Bulk Purchasing

Resources including business management tools, human resource tools, program administration tools and classroom resources are available at no cost through an online centralized knowledge resource that aligns with State requirements. For example, emergency preparedness plan templates, and more. These tools can help child care providers focus more on the child care side of their agency, and less on business processes.

In addition to Shared Resources, child care agencies may access bulk/group purchasing at negotiated price reductions and group discounts.

For more information, please visit the www.childcaretennessee.com website.

Pediatric First Aid and CPR Training/Certification

To promote safe environments for children, Pediatric First Aid and CPR training and certification are available to child care educators and administrators of licensed child care agencies at no cost. For more information on training and certification dates, please visit Child Care Resource and Referral's (CCR&R) website: [Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network \(tnccrr.org\)](https://www.tn.gov/child-care)

Business Academies

Small Business Academies are available to promote best practices and strengthen business operations for child care agencies. The focus of the academies are in the areas of:

- **Budgets, Projections, and Planning**
- **Financial Reports and Internal Controls**
- **Marketing for Child Care Programs**
- **Staff Recruitment and Retention for Center-based Child Care Programs**

For more information, please visit Child Care Resource and Referral's (CCR&R) website: [Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network \(tnccrr.org\)](https://www.tn.gov/child-care)

Professional Development Opportunities

The Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network offers Quality Coaches who are highly trained and educated to provide TDHS licensed child care professionals with the training and technical assistance they need to provide the best care possible for Tennessee's children. For more information visit [Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network \(tnccrr.org\)](https://www.tn.gov/child-care).

TECTA – The Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance is a statewide training and professional recognition system based on the belief that early childhood education program personnel should have professional knowledge and skills to provide appropriate care and education for young children. The TECTA Scholarship includes the application fee for candidates seeking the CDA® Credential paid by the Council for Professional Recognition, as well as reporting, updates, and verification by TECTA CDA® Professional Development Specialists.

Tennessee Early Childhood Program Administrator Credential (TECPAC) and Infant and Toddler Credential professional credential programs support professional development pathways of early childhood program administrators and infant and toddler educators, respectively, through the demonstration of competencies including academics, experience, and portfolio assessments. Learn more here: [Training and Technical Assistance Programs \(tnstate.edu\)](https://www.tn.gov/child-care)

The Tennessee Child Care Online Training System (TCCOTS), is a free web-based asynchronous training platform to meet the unique and dynamic education needs of the early childhood education workforce. Licensed agencies may access this training at [TN Home - ProSolutions Training](https://www.tn.gov/child-care).

TDHS is committed to promoting early childhood environments that are safe, healthy, and educationally rich. Thank you for offering Tennessee families learning opportunities and environments that will help their children thrive.

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